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U.S. Fears For Future Of OAS

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The United States fears that the failure of the Organization of American States to act decisively in the Dominican crisis may permanently impair its effectiveness.

American officials believe the hemispheric alliance can regain its prestige and self-respect only by acting swiftly on two issues:

1. Establishment of the already approved inter-American peace-keeping force.

2. Assumption of leadership in working out a political solution in the strife-torn Dominican Republic.

So far, three and one-half weeks after being confronted with its "moment of truth," the OAS has been unable to make a strong initiative on either point.

Two Consequences

This "vacillation," as U.S. officials describe it, has had two consequences that Washington deplores:

1. It has forced the United States to resume the role of hemispheric policeman, which it had abandoned more than 30 years ago.

2. It has permitted the United Nations to move into a regional quarrel in this hemisphere for the first time.

[Latin American members of the OAS have indicated with varying degrees of vehemence that the United States jumped rather than was pushed into resuming the role of "hemispheric policeman."

[In addition, skepticism and differences among the Latin Americans over the U.S. role were given as a principal reason for the OAS's indecisive handling of the crisis.

[Another element cited as

impeding action is Latin sensitivity to the political winds at home, where there have been protests against what is regarded as a U.S. move to thwart democratic forces in the Dominican Republic.]

Inwilling Leader

The United States however, as felt obliged to assume an unwelcome position of leadership in trying to get the warring Dominican factions to stop shooting and form a coalition government. U.S. officials recognize that this is a task likely to leave Washington with more enemies than friends.

In the first week of the crisis, President Johnson said that communist conspirators had taken over control of the rebellion. And the United States fostered creation of a military-civilian junta.

Now the United States finds itself unable to get this junta to stop fighting and negotiate with the rebels, who have indicated a willingness to do so. Furthermore, some officials privately acknowledge Mr. Johnson went too far when he said the rebellion was dominated by Reds.

No Illusions

The United States has never had any illusions about the ability of the OAS to act speedily. However, it has found the Organization useful in molding a hemispheric consensus on critical issues and draping the mantle of multilateral approval over Washington's actions.

This has had the effect of keeping the United Nations from concerning itself with hemispheric matters, thus blocking Soviet and other Communist efforts to get a hand in negotiations and settlements.

However, the Dominican crisis found a number of the Latin American states in particularly perilous political situation at home. This has been one of the principal factors preventing OAS member states from moving more decisively, even though they know that the future of their hemispheric Organization is in danger.